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IN THE APPLICATION

OF

LYNN ROBIE

FOR A

PRAYER AID

PRAYER AID

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to prayer aids, and more particularly to a cushion or pillow having a number of pockets to retain prayer cards and other religious articles.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

10 Most religions practice some form of prayer. Prayer is practiced in a number of ways and for a variety of reasons. The act of praying can involve the use of religious and non-religious objects and be either overt or covert. Some people believe that their religion should not be belittled by ostentatious displays of prayer. Such people believe that prayer is meant to be private, out of the public's view, and
15 that those who ostentatiously display the fact they are praying are insincere.

It therefore is not uncommon for people to hold a religious item or items, or to hide the items on their person, clothing or in their possessions, as they pray. At times, people find the

best way to continue to think about a prayer is by keeping the religious items in a book, by their bed, on their body or clothing, or under their pillow. A problem with the above-mentioned ways of keeping the religious item is that the article could be misplaced, or it could fall out of the pages of a book or fall off a bed.

Some religious items, such as paper items, cannot be worn on the person. Other items are fragile, and thus can be easily ruined if worn or placed in bedding. As a result, it would be advantageous to find a way to keep the religious item out of the public's view, held in a secure place, and near one's person without being worn on the body. A number of pillows and dolls have been developed to display messages, mementos or to hold items having secular and non-secular significance.

U.S. Patent Application Publication Number 2002/0050008, published May 2, 2002, describes a tooth shaped pillow. The pillow has a hidden pocket that is covered by a flap and a drawstring pouch that is securely held within the hidden pocket. The pillow's hidden pocket or the drawstring pouch within the pocket is used to hold objects, such as baby teeth, toothpaste or loose coins. U.S. Patent Number 5,778,468, issued to Saarela et al. on July 14, 1998, describes a pillow also used as a tote.

The pillow is cloud-shaped and has an elastic pocket to hold books and small toys.

U.S. Patent Number 4,309,784, issued to Cohen on January 12, 1982, describes a pillow display case. One face of a conventional pillow is overlaid with a transparent plastic sheet to form a pocket. The pocket is then filled with mementos and other objects that can be viewed from the outside.

U.S. Patent Number 4,768,245, issued to Dutton on September 6, 1988, describes a pillow having a pocket for receiving a book. The book cover and pillow are coordinated to match each other so the user can associate the pillow with the book. U.S. Patent Number 4,853,994, issued to Ekstein on August 8, 1989, describes a pillow book in which cushions form the front and back covers of the book and the pages of the book are disposed between the two cushions.

Dolls having storage capabilities or that are used to convey religious sentiment are disclosed in U.S. Patent Number 5,324,201, issued to Friedel on June 28, 1994 (a therapeutic doll having a torso cavity for holding icons and written messages to dissuade a person from carrying out vices); U.S. Patent Number 5,059,149, issued to Stone on October 22, 1991 (a stuffed animal having one or more storage compartments in its

body and appendages for storing or displaying objects); and U.S. Patent Number 6,447,363, issued to Carraway on September 10, 2002 (prayer pledge doll used to promise to pray for another).

None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed. Thus a prayer aid solving the aforementioned problems is desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The prayer aid is a pocketed pillow or cushion that is used to retain and conceal prayer card(s) as one prays. The prayer aid has one or several pockets placed in a variety of arrangements. The pockets on the prayer aid may be disposed on the pillow's surface, in the side seams, or under a design formed on the pillow's surface. The pockets may have flaps to help conceal the pocket and to prevent the prayer card or cards from sliding out of the pocket. Both the prayer aid and the pockets on the prayer aid can take a variety of shapes and forms.

Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to provide a prayer aid that has pockets to retain prayer cards as one prays.

It is another object of the invention to provide a prayer aid that allows a person to keep and conceal a prayer card.

5 It is a further object of the invention to provide a prayer aid that is soft and comfortable and for use as a conventional pillow.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a prayer aid in the form of a pillow having pockets and prayer cards retained in the pockets that may be formed in various designs.

10 It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

15 These and other objects of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a prayer aid according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the prayer aid according to the present invention with the flaps raised, showing insertion of prayer cards into the pockets.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the prayer aid according to the present invention in which the pillow is configured to simulate a shirt.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the prayer aid according to the present invention in which the pillow is configured to simulate a bear paw.

Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is a prayer aid, designated generally as 10 in Figs. 1 and 2. The prayer aid 10 is a pocketed pillow or cushion. The prayer aid 10 is constructed as a conventional pillow 12 or cushion having an outer case or cover 14 enclosing cushioning material. The pillow 12 is filled with batting or other conventional filler or cushioning material (not shown).

The prayer aid 10 shown in Figs. 1 and 2 is generally rectangular and has a cross design 40 disposed on the cover 14, as well as a plurality of pockets 20 and 42. Prayer aid 10 can

be made in shapes other than a rectangle, such as a triangle, a square, a circle, cylindrical etc. Surface pockets 20 are four-sided, with three sides attached to the cover 14 and the fourth side being unattached in order to form the opening 21 into the pocket.

The pockets 20 preferably have a flap 22 to cover the opening 21 of the pocket 20. As shown in Fig.2, flap 22 is a generally rectangular flap with one full side and at least a portion of two other sides unattached to the cover 14 so that the flap 22 can be lifted up and folded back to expose the opening 21 of the pocket 20. Alternatively, flap 22 may have three full sides of its four sides attached to the cover 14 to make it a fixed flap instead of the hinged flap shown in Figs. 1 and 2. Flap 22 helps to retain objects placed in the pockets 20, such as a single prayer card 30 or a plurality of prayer cards 35. Normally prayer card(s) 30, 35 are smooth and as a result they slide past each other and can potentially slide out of the pockets 20.

A second type of pocket 42 is concealed underneath the arm of the cross design 40. Design 40 is preferably sewn to the surface of the prayer aid 10. Pocket 42 has three sides attached to the cover 14 and a fourth side which is not attached

to the cover in order to define the pocket opening 43. Pocket 42 is placed so that the open side is formed by the material defining the cross design 40. The remaining portion of pocket 42 is pouch-like, and is disposed between cross 40 and cover 14.

5 Pockets 20 and 42 are used to conceal and retain a prayer card 30 or a deck of prayer cards 35. The prayer card(s) 30, 35 are largely Christian products sold commercially by the numerous Christian based organizations, such as Navigator Press (a Colorado Springs, Colorado based company) and Bridge Building
10 Images, Inc. (based in Burlington, Vermont). Typically, a prayer card 30 displays a religious picture on one side of the card and a prayer on the opposite side of the card 30. The cards 30, 35 are used as a medium for individuals, both adult and children, to provide structured methods of praying. The
15 prayer cards 35 help an individual improve their praying skills by guiding them to pray on particular topics and motivating individuals to pray effectively.

The prayer aid 10 is described for use with Christian religions, but it can also be used for other religions as well.
20 One specific example of prayer cards designed for children are called T.H.U.M.B. prayer cards. The T.H.U.M.B. acronym stands for Tribal, Hindu, Unreligious, Muslim, and Buddhist. Each card

has prayers written about each identified group and encourages the child to pray for the group cited on the cards. The prayer aid 10 preferably holds and conceals a prayer card 30. However, the prayer aid 10 should not be limited to retain a prayer card 30 or a deck of prayer cards 35 alone. The pockets 20 and 42 can hold other religious items as well, such as a rosary, a crucifix, a bible, etc., or non-religious items of sentimental value, such as children's drawing or pictures of family or friends.

The prayer aid 10 provides a creative way to pray by allowing the user to hold and conceal a prayer card 30 in a comfortable object that also has everyday use. An added benefit of using prayer aid 10 is to permit the user to hold a prayer card 30 in a secure place out of the public's view. The prayer aid 10 allows the owner to pray without disclosing the fact that they are praying or that they are holding a prayer card 30. Also, the prayer aid 10 permits the user to keep a prayer card 30 in their possession without being worn on their clothing or even on their body. By possessing the prayer aid 10 the user is able to meditate on praying and/or keep the spirit of the loved one as represented in the picture or writing near them. The prayer aid 10 is designed to be held but it can also be used for

sleeping and kneeling purposes. Often the practice of sleeping or resting with one's head against the pillow 12 containing one or more prayer cards 30 and 35 provides the user with a comforting feeling that is akin to praying in one's sleep.

5 Fig. 3 shows a prayer aid 100 in which the pillow 102 is configured to simulate a shirt. More particularly, the pillow 102 may be configured to resemble an occupational shirt that can be made to represent different occupations, such as a military camouflage shirt, a hospital worker's scrubs, a construction
10 worker's shirt, etc. Pillow 102 has a number of pockets disposed on its surface and in its seams. Pillow 102 has an outer casing including outer pillow cover 104 and inner lining 106. Two pockets 120 are disposed on outer pillow cover 104. Pockets 120 are four-sided, having three sides attached to the
15 outer cover 104 of the pillow 102 and one side being left open to define pocket opening 121. Pocket 120 has a flap 122 disposed above pocket opening 121. Flap 122 is a hinged flap, folding down to cover pocket opening 121 and up to expose pocket opening 121. Optionally, a buttonhole 123 is formed in the
20 center of flap 122 to receive button 125 to secure flap 122 to pocket 120; otherwise, the flap 122 may simply lie over the pocket opening 121. If desired, flaps 122 can be secured to

pocket 120 by means other than buttons, such as hook and loop closures, snaps or zippers.

A second type of pocket is disposed attached to outer pillow cover 104, namely seam pocket 124 disposed above left breast pocket 120. Seam pocket 124 has three attached sides forming a pouch and an open side defining pocket opening 128. The side forming pocket opening 128 is designed to simulate a seam extending between the shirt collar and the side of the shirt where a shirt sleeve would normally be attached.

Pillow 100 also displays a third pocket type, a layered pocket 126 formed on and by the inner lining 106. The layered pocket 126 in Fig. 3. shows two pockets; one pocket 126b lies on top of another pocket 126a, however the layered pocket could be three or more pockets disposed on top of each other. Layered pockets 126a and 126b are disposed in the neck opening of the prayer aid 100, however it can be located anywhere on the surface of the prayer aid 100. Layered pockets 126a and 126b are made by folding and sewing one large piece of fabric in layers, or by sewing a number of fabrics on top of each other to form layers. Layered pockets 126a and 126b can be made to have a flap 132 that covers its open side or it can be made to have

no flap at all. Pockets 120, 124, 126a, 126b all hold a prayer card 130, a deck of prayer cards, pictures or drawings.

Fig. 4 shows a prayer aid 200 in which the pillow 202 is configured as a bear paw. The bear paw pillow 202 has pockets 242 located underneath each of its five pads 240 and pockets 220a and 220b simulating the sole of the bear paw 200. Each pocket 242 has four sides, including three sides attached to the pillow cover 204 and one unattached side that forms an opening 243 for the pocket 242 and three closed sides forming a pouch pocket.

Sole pocket 220a and sole pocket 220b are formed from one pocket that has been divided into two adjacent pockets by a seam 232. The sole of the bear paw could be made as one undivided pocket or into numerous pockets divided by several seams. A flap 222 covers the openings of adjacent pockets 220a and 220b and forms the upper portion of the sole on the bear paw pillow 200 design. Flap 222 is fixed, in that three of four sides of the flap are secured to the prayer aid 10, 100, 200 surface. Sole pocket 220 could be designed without the flap 222 and still faithfully represent the sole design of the bear paw pillow 200. All the pockets are designed to hold a prayer card 230 or a set of prayer cards.

The pockets disposed on and within the prayer aid 10, 100 and 200, respectively, can be surface pockets 20, 120, 220a, 220b or concealed pockets such as pockets 42, 126a, 126b, 242 as shown in Figs. 2, 3 and 4, respectively or seam pocket 124 shown in Fig. 3. The pockets are preferably opaque since they are designed to conceal the prayer card 30. The pockets are generally made of non-elastic materials such as fabric, but if desired and feasible elastic fabric may be used to construct the pockets. The pockets can be placed anywhere and in any position on the prayer aid 10, 100, 200 they can also take a number of sizes, shapes and forms. For example, the pockets can be circular, two-sided or multi-sided.

The number of pockets disposed on the prayer aid 10, 100, 200 can range in number from two to several. The pockets can be individual and separate, be adjacent each other in a side by side design, or disposed on top of each other in a layered design. The pockets can also be designed to have a flap or not have a flap. If flaps are used they may be hinged 22, 122 as shown in Figs. 2 and 3, respectively, or fixed 222 as shown in Fig. 4.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.